Welcome

A warm welcome to this 9th issue of Epistula, the twice-yearly newsletter from the Roman Society. An important feature of this issue is that we’re seeking your opinion on the future direction of the journal Britannia. Please do let us know what you think of the Editorial Committee proposals. It has also been a busy six months for the Society with our AGM and a diverse range of lectures and events. Keep your eye on the Roman Society website for more events and do come along to any near you.

We are also pleased to continue to expand the newsletter beyond Archaeology, with notes on recent research on Ascanius, Juvenal, the Antonine plague and the ancient senses.

This newsletter relies on you for information which you think will interest your fellow Romanists, whether archaeology, art, ancient history, literature or any other aspect of the Roman world, so please do send in your news on recent research, upcoming talks or new publications for the next edition.

Ben Croxford and Louise Revell
Editors

Society news

Events round-up

From Hippos to Hippodromes
The Roman Society sponsored a lecture at Brading Roman Villa, Isle of Wight, by Dr Thomas Kiely, the Curator of the Cypriot Department of Greece and Rome at the British Museum. The lecture, entitled ‘The ancient history of Cyprus’, was held on March 7, 2015 and drew a full house.

Dr Thomas Kiely lectures at Brading

Greek and Roman Curses
A joint Roman and Hellenic Society event took place on 17th March 2015, focusing on the phenomenon of cursing from the sixth century BC to the sixth century AD. Dr Esther Eidinow from Nottingham University spoke on “Greek inscribed curses and the social historian”. These curses, from the sixth to the first centuries BC, mostly on lead tablets but some in the rather creepy form of dolls and coffins, contain various forms of “binding spells” intended to immobilise or restrain their targets, and range from simple lists of names to invocations to underworld deities to assist in the binding process. They show a world of victims—the writer is rarely identified—and although often formulaic and repetitive, suggest that what people in ancient Greece may have been most worried about was other people. The lecture includes instructions on how to make one!
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Stephen Clews, manager of the Roman Baths in Bath, spoke about the curse tablets found in the sacred spring to Sulis Minerva, in a lecture entitled “Messages to the Goddess revealed. Private thoughts of ordinary people. Read all about it”. There are 130 of these from the second to the fourth centuries AD, mostly asking for the return, to the goddess rather than the owner, of stolen items such as jewellery, coins and clothing, and punishment of the miscreant. Stephen’s talk ranged from our understanding of pagan prayer to the curious case of curse 100 (originally transcribed upside down so not surprisingly mistranslated) and ancient and modern interpretations of “a bushel of cloud”.

The last speaker, Dr Margaret Mountford, discussed first to sixth century AD curses under the heading “A plague on all your horses: curses from race-courses in the ancient world”. Chariot-racing was a huge and lucrative spectator sport and these curses were “binding spells” aimed at causing members of an opposing or unfavoured team to lose. The curses include strange signs, drawings and magical words and invoke a wide range of deities and spirits from Christian and ancient near-Eastern religions as well as the Greek and Roman pantheon. Mostly on lead tablets, P. Oxy. 5205 is the first one on papyrus to be published. Who wrote and who deposited them remains a mystery.

All the lectures can be viewed through a link on the Roman Society web-site: https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLO_zKwlRJ8jbPC9wE2IDvSDDkWT7ZbMUM

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**Cotswold Archaeology Mick Aston Annual Lecture**

The Cotswold Archaeology Mick Aston Annual Lecture was this year once again jointly sponsored by the Roman Society. The lecture was delivered in Cirencester on 18 March 2015 by Prof Tim Darvill and Neil Holbrook and was entitled *Grismond’s Tower and Cirencester’s Western Roman Cemeteries*. This lecture was the first dedicated to the late Prof Mick Aston, a leading and dedicated field archaeologist, well known for his work on Time Team and for fourteen years a trustee of Cotswold Archaeology. The lecture drew an impressive audience of 250 who learnt about two very topical and related subjects.

Tim Darvill spoke about the enigmatic earthen mound known as Grismond’s Tower which has attracted the interest of historians and visiting writers as far back as Leland in 1540. Tim explained the many, sometimes fanciful, interpretations offered for what is basically a very large round barrow of presumed prehistoric date. Neil Holbrook then described recent work, literally across the road from the mound, on the former Romano-British cemeteries in advance of new building. Discoveries of burials and cremations here go back to the 1960s when a garage was built. Used more recently as a car park, further finds including a beautifully preserved Roman bronze cockerel were uncovered a few years ago.

In February of this year came the dramatic discovery of a well-preserved Roman tombstone, complete with inscription and frieze which Neil described to his appreciative audience in some detail. The tombstone reads:

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*Attendees at the annual Cotswold Archaeology lecture in honour of Mick Aston*

*Dr Margaret Mountford speaking on the use of curses to influence the outcome of chariot races*
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To the Shades of the Dead. Bodicacia (my) wife lived 27 years

Dr Roger Tomlin has examined the inscription and comments that Bodicacia is a previously unattested name, but derives from a common Celtic root which is something of a British speciality. The classic instance is Lollia Bodicca, who buried her centurion husband at Lambaesis; but he served previously in all three British legions, and she is bound to be British. There is a 'Bodiccius' in the First Cohort of Britones in Pannonia, and the dedication to 'Tutela Boudiga' by the man from York at Bordeaux. They all have the basic 'Victory' etymology, just like the queen.

The discovery of the tombstone created huge public interest, and its discovery was captured live on radio and television. A report on the discovery on the Cotswold Archaeology website received an astonishing 24,000 visits in a single day, a vivid demonstration of the popular appeal of Roman archaeology.

Neil Holbrook, Cotswold Archaeology
www.cotswoldarchaeology.co.uk

The Beau Street Hoard Symposium

Inspired by the discovery of 17,577 Roman silver coins in Bath in 2007, the Beau Street Hoard Symposium ran over three days from the 22 – 24 April. It began with an introductory public lecture in the Pump Room by Richard Abdy from the British Museum, who has been leading on the research and analysis of the hoard. Over the next 2 days, 120 participants listened to papers from 17 contributors reviewing its archaeological context, detailed analysis and numismatic significance. Papers also looked at the impact of the discovery of hoards on museums and how museums are able to use them for social and learning projects.

The Symposium illustrated how the Treasure Act of 1996 has had a massive impact on the reporting and finding of hoards in the UK. It was given a European dimension through Professor Bursche’s contribution and wider discussion on the significance of a Roman hoard from Poland.

Delegates at the Beau Street Hoard Symposium

The Symposium was the culmination of a much larger programme of 33 events and activities that have taken place over the last year, all inspired by the Beau Street Hoard and organised by the Roman Baths Museum, where the hoard is now on show. The activities programme included 3 conservation days, 52 lectures, 16 museum sleepovers and 17 roadshows, and was supported financially by the Heritage Lottery Fund and The Roman Society. The Association for Roman Archaeology and the UK Numismatic Trust were also significant contributors to the Symposium, which was free to all and included bursaries for student attendees.

A popular publication of the hoard, written by British Museum curator Eleanor Ghey, is available from both the British Museum and The Roman Baths. Full academic publication of the hoard will follow later this year, published by Archaeopress.

Stephen Clews
Curator, Roman Baths and Pump Room

Roman Society AGM

The Society’s AGM took place on Saturday 6 June at Senate House. Catharine Edwards was elected as the new President of the Society, and Elizabeth McKnight becomes the new Hon. Secretary. Philip Kay remains the Hon. Treasurer. Four new members of Council were elected: Robert Lister, Duncan Lowe, Annalisa Marzano, and Julian Spencer.

A large audience gathered to hear the colloquium which followed the AGM on the subject, Romanisation? Provincial Cultures in the Principate, a topic which provoked much discussion. Professor Dominic Rathbone delivered his Presidential Address on Gods, Soldiers, Mummies: Making Egypt Roman. He was followed by
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Andrew Gardner (Post-Romanisation Perspectives on the Provincial West), Tony Spawforth (Romanization? Modern Problems and Ancient Greeks) and Tessa Rajak (Changing Faces, Changing Places, in Roman Judaea). If you missed this event, you can still catch-up by watching vidcasts of all four lectures which are available on the Society’s YouTube channel: https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLO_zKwlRJ8jZKKnwBQ43M-Gk1vZpjXBD1

The Roman Society’s AGM

British Museum Travelling Exhibition

The Roman Society is pleased to continue its support of lectures delivered in association with the touring exhibition: Roman Empire: Power and People.

Since Christmas, the exhibition has travelled to The McManus, Dundee’s Art Gallery and Museum (24 January-10 May). Dr Fraser Hunter gave a lecture entitled Life on the Edge of the Roman Empire. From 30 May -31 September, the exhibition is at Sedgecum Roman Fort & Baths and Dr Rebecca Jones gave a lecture at the Society of Antiquaries, Newcastle, entitled On the march: Roman campaigns in Scotland.

Britannia: Roman Britain in 20xx. Views requested

The Roman Britain in 20xx is a popular section of Britannia. It has three constituent parts: Sites Investigated; Inscriptions and Finds reported under the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS). Over the last 25 years the amount of archaeological work taking place in Britain has increased out of all proportion to that done previously and as a consequence the length of the section has increased. It has now reached the maximum size that can reasonably be accommodated within the print journal. The Britannia Editorial committee has been alive to this issue for some time and earlier this year decided to set up a small working party to look at future options under the chairmanship of Neil Holbrook. The working party has now come forward with some proposals upon which we would like to solicit the views of the readership. While these primarily relate to the Sites Investigated sub-section, the approach suggested has implications for the other two parts as well.

There is a consensus amongst the working party that the section should continue to be as comprehensive an account as possible of work in Roman Britain, though as contributions are a voluntary undertaking there will always be differential levels of sign up and geographic coverage. To increase comprehensiveness it is suggested that a greater number of editors, with strong local / regional knowledge, will be required, who will take a proactive approach to soliciting contributions. The inevitable consequence of this approach would be a necessity for at least a proportion of the section to be available on-line only and it is therefore suggested that a two-pronged approach should be adopted:

Online Only: this would comprise the comprehensive listing of all material received, including colour plans and photographs. Each listing would have a hyperlink to the relevant OASIS (or its equivalent schemes) listing/grey literature report, and/or HER event record if available on line. There is no word length required for this output.

Print Journal: this would be a sub-set of the online version and would comprise selected highlights from those comprehensive listings. There would be an enhanced emphasis on entries which have accompanying plans and illustrations, and where the findings are capable of contextualisation.

There is a further desire to see two further tiers of material being submitted for inclusion both in the print journal and online. Such contributions would appear in the shorter contributions section and be in the order of 2,000-3,000 words plus at least one plan. They would comprise periodic summaries of long-running projects which describe the main findings and contextualise their significance, and quinquennial reviews of work done in a particular region, or of a theme (religion, military matters, etc).

The PAS section is already a distillation of the most significant finds from the on-line database, and attempts are already being made to limit its printed page length. It is suggested that the inscriptions sub-section should also aim for an approach whereby the most significant finds are available in the print journal, with those of lesser significance only available on-line.
We are keen to receive feedback on these proposals by the end of 2015. If you would like to comment please email us at office@romansociety.org or write to the Roman Society, Senate House, Malet Street, London WC1E 7HU, England. It is anticipated that a decision will made on how to proceed in March 2016 and, if approved changes will be implemented with effect from RB in 2016 (the volume for 2017).

Neil Holbrook and Barry Burnham

**Society News**

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**Dates for your diary**

**The Hellenic and Roman Societies present a Greek and Roman Armour Day**

**Monday 20 July**

The Beveridge Hall, Senate House, University of London, Malet Street / Russell Square, London WC1E 7HU

Illustrated presentations by six world experts of their researches into how effective ancient armour was in practice. Issues will include production, wearability, enemy weapons and tactics, and changes and developments.

10.30am doors open
11.00am welcome - Presidents of the Hellenic and Roman Societies

**Greek and Italic armour**

chair and respondent - Professor Hans van Wees (University College London)

11.15am Professor Peter Krentz (Davidson College NC): *Marathon to Chaionenia: changes in hoplite armour*

12.00 Professor Gregory Aldrete (University of Wisconsin Green Bay): *Linen body amour: reconstruction and tests*

1.00pm lunch
2.00pm Dr Mike Burns (Leeds): *The South Italic cuirass from the 6th to 3rd centuries BC*

**Roman armour**

chair and respondent - Dr Jonathan Coulston (University of St Andrews)

3.00 pm Dr Mike Bishop (Journal of Roman Military Equipment): *The impenetrable wall: Roman body armour assessed*

4.00pm tea
4.30pm Dr Guy Stiebel (Tel-Aviv University): *'Also he armed him with a coat of mail': the amour in Roman Judaea*

5.30pm Dr Christian Miks (Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum Mainz): *The rise and development of segmented helmets in the later Roman to early Byzantine army*

6.15pm closing words - Presidents of the Hellenic and Roman Societies

Admission is free, and includes a sandwich lunch and tea in the afternoon. Tickets for attendance must be obtained in advance by online registration at Eventbrite. [http://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/greek-and-roman-armour-day-tickets-15741745986?aff=eac2](http://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/greek-and-roman-armour-day-tickets-15741745986?aff=eac2)

The Societies thank the Institute of Classical Studies for its assistance in staging this conference, and Mr Christian Levett for his generous support.

**Explore Roman London – Saturday 3 October**

Owing to demand this trip is now fully booked up. For further details or to join the waiting list please contact the Society: office@romansociety.org

**Rural Settlement in Roman Yorkshire – Saturday 24 October**

Joint conference sponsored by the Roman Antiquities Section (YAS) and the Roman Society

The Milton Rooms, Market Square, Malton YO17 7LX

9.30am Coffee and Registration
10.00am Dr Martyn Allen: *Rural settlement across Roman Yorkshire: data syntheses from the Roman Rural Settlement project*

10.30am Dr Clive Waddington: *A neglected frontier: results from preliminary excavations on a high status settlement on the Brigantian-Roman frontier*
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11.00am  Dr Peter Halkon – *Roman impact on the landscape of the Foulness valley and the western escarpment of the Yorkshire Wolds*

11.30am  Professor Martin Millett: *Across Wold and Vale: new evidence for the dynamics of Roman rural settlement*

12-1.30pm  Lunch

1.30pm  Dr Steve Sherlock: *The Landscape of Cataractonium (Catterick)* (title tbc)

2.00pm  Ian Roberts: *The Other Side of the Vale: The Magnesian Limestone in the Later Iron Age and Roman Period*

2.30pm  Peter Denison-Edson: *Romano-British settlement patterns in Swaledale: answers and questions, with particular reference to 4th-century material culture*

3.00pm  Coffee

3.30pm  Mike Haken and Hugh Toller – *Lines in the landscape: Roman roads and rural settlement* (title tbc)

4.00pm  Nansi Rosenberg - *The Aiskew Roman villa* (title tbc)

4.30pm  Discussion

5.00pm  Conference ends

Tea and coffee will be provided. For further details, contact: pandjwilson@btopenworld.com or 01944 738282

Download a booking form from the website: http://www.romansociety.org/events/conferences.html

Or contact the Society: office@romansociety.org

Tickets for the event, including afternoon refreshments, cost £20. Bookings are being taken now, and tickets will be sent out in September.

Download a booking form from the website: http://www.romansociety.org/events/conferences.html
Or contact the Society: office@romansociety.org

**Roman Religion Conference at University of Southampton – Saturday 21 November**

A day conference organised by the Roman Society in conjunction with Life Long Learning, University of Southampton. Papers will cover recent excavations of temples and research into religious sculpture and artefacts. Booking details will be released closer to the time.

**Publications**

The Roman Society is pleased to announce the publication of Britannia Monograph 27.


This volume presents an assessment of the contribution that developer-funded archaeology has made to knowledge of the major towns of Roman Britain. It contains papers on the legislative and planning
epic has shown that inconsistency is a key characteristic of the genre. It is also well known that the age of youthful characters is often difficult to ascertain in classical literature, and the passage of time in the Aeneid is notoriously vague. Despite all this, I argue in a new book on Virgil’s Ascanius that his uncertain age is significant, and in addition that acknowledging that uncertainty offers a new way to understand his role in the epic.

Ascanius, one could say, is as old as you want him to be – or as old as Virgil needs him to be at any given point. And his fluctuating age is part of a greater disjointedness that marks his character: different episodes show us different perspectives on him and present us with an incoherent and fragmented set of impressions as we try to understand his significance. He is a character who has polarised Virgil’s readers: some have found him puzzling, unattractive and an agent of chaos, while others speak of him as a lovely child and a beacon of hope. My approach is different. I am not interested in whether Virgil makes Ascanius likeable, but in what message about the future he encodes in the figure of this child in the process of maturation, striving towards adulthood but remaining childish to the end. The difficulty of pinning down how old Ascanius is as he engages in this quest for adulthood is, I suggest, analogous to the difficulties Virgil sees in pinning down the details of the Trojans’ larger quest towards a Roman future of endless empire and world domination. This future, promised by Jupiter in Book One, is as glorious as the heroic future Ascanius longs for. But despite the hindsight with which Virgil wrote, his Aeneid also makes it clear that achieving such promised and longed-for futures is a process rife with difficulties. In the figure of Ascanius, a symbol of hope throughout the epic, we are also shown that history is not destiny: progress, even towards clear and necessarily achievable goals, is much less certain than it seems.

Dr Anne Rogerson is Charles Tesoriero Lecturer in Latin at the University of Sydney. Her book, Virgil’s Ascanius: Imagining the Future in the Aeneid is forthcoming with Cambridge University Press later this year.

Mercator Jason: Juvenal an the Argonauts

In Juvenal’s explosive anti-marriage rant about all conceivable female vices (Satires 6: 100-100 CE), there is an interesting cameo appearance by Jason and the Argonauts, amidst his rant about the beautiful gold-digger Bibula, wife of Sertorius: mense quidem brumae, cum iam mercator lason clausus et armatis obstat casa candida nautis, grandia tolluntur crystallina, maxima rursus
murrina, deinde adamas notissimus et Beronices in digito factus pretiosior. (Juvenal Sat. 6.153-7)

Even in midwinter, when merchant Jason is already shut off and white stalls stand in the way of the armed sailors,
Great crystal vases are carried off, enormous agate Too, and diamond made most famous and more precious
By the finger of Berenice.

These lines puzzled scholiasts: why is Jason called ‘merchant’ (mercator), and why is he shut in (clausus)? A rediscovered scholia in the P manuscript offered a convincing explanation: the indulged wife is buying extraordinarily extravagant Saturnalia presents on the Campus Martius, where stalls were set up, thus obscuring the representation of Jason and the Argonauts on the portico of Agrippa.

But is there more to this connection than physical proximity? Kathleen Coleman suggests that mercator Iason is an example of Juvenal using a single word ‘to undercut the grand or the pretentious’. Certainly this fits with Juvenal’s mention of the Golden Fleece, with the diminutive pelliculae (‘little skin’) at Satires 1.10-11, in which he thoroughly debunks the epic genre (perhaps thinking back in particular to Valerius Flaccus’ Argonautica in the previous generation). But the association of Jason with traders and merchant-explorers is a prominent part of the reception of the Argonautic tradition. Those who took part in the gold-rush in the Americas were known as Argonauts. Another example of this sort of reception is Argonauts of the Western Pacific: an Account of native enterprise and adventure in the archipelagos of Melanesian New Guinea, a 1922 work by Bronislaw Malinowski, which had a huge impact on anthropology and ethnography.

To take a totally different type of example, the British new-wave pop group XTC included a song entitled Jason and the Argonauts in their 1982 album English Settlement, using the Argonaut myth to condemn capitalism, linking the cruelty of humans across the world to their desire for material goods:
I have watched the manimals go buy—buying shoes, buying sweets, buying knives.
I have watched the manimals and cried buying time, buying ends to other peoples lives.
judas and the argonauts there may be no golden fleece but human riches I'll release....

Perhaps Juvenal’s point has as much to do with Roman condemnation of wealth and trade as with condemnation of the actions of women. While Jason carried off Medea, and used her as a way to obtain the fleece in a quest show-casing epic competition for glory, Sertorius’ wife carries off enormous booty from the market, competing with her neighbours. But just as XTC condemn the treatment of women,
I was in a land where men force women to hide their facial features, and here in the west it’s just the same but they’re using make-up veils.
so Juvenal also focuses on the fact that Sertorius treats Bibula as an object:
‘cur desiderio Bibulae Sertorius ardet?’
si verum excuties, facies non uxor amat.
tres rugae subeant et se cutis arida laxet,
fiant obscuri dentes oculique minores,
‘collige sarcinulas,’ dicet libertus, ‘et exi.’ (Juvenal, Sat. 6.142-6)

‘Why is Sertorius burning with desire for Bibula?’
If you shake out the truth, the face not the wife is loved.
Let three wrinkles creep up and let her skin be loose and dry,
Let her teeth get dark and her eyes less sharp,
‘Pack your bags,’ the freedman says, ‘and go’.
Exploitation and objectification is mutual, and caused by wealth and the desire for wealth. The Argonauts are already an image for the emptiness of desire for material goods, and I hope to bring out more unlikely connections such as this in my forthcoming book.

Helen Lovatt is Associate Professor of Classics at the University of Nottingham. In Search of the Argonauts: The Remarkable History of Jason and the Golden Fleece is forthcoming (2016 with I. B. Tauris). The publishers have offered readers of Epistula a 30% discount if ordering online until the end of the year. The discount code is ARGONAUTS15.
Smell and the ancient senses

‘Papyrus, your nose and your dong are both so long that when your dong grows, your nose knows.’ Martial’s short comic epigram imagines Papyrus as a grotesque figure with a giant nose stretching out to meet his stinking phallus; the nose that mirrored his phallus drank up its own foul odours, conjuring a host of associations with bestial stench, sexual obscenity and self-indulgent animal sniffing. Martial keeps Papyrus’ foul body at a safe distance: the poet knows he stinks, and understands what that means, and – as with so many ancient accounts of foul smells – his barbed satire warns his audience not to get too close.

*Smell and the Ancient Senses*, published in December 2014, is the second instalment in Routledge’s ‘Senses in Antiquity’ series. Smell has attracted – perhaps due to its vapid and transitory nature – the least scholarly attention in classical circles and beyond, but it is a sense that was simultaneously sublime and animalistic and so became for ancient thinkers a potent index of classical values. As well as examining approaches to olfaction in Greek medicine, philosophy and religion, essays in this volume turn their attention to Rome. By assessing archaeological evidence for open-channel sewers, cesspits, tanneries, fish-markets, and so on, Ann Koloski-Ostrow presents the traditional case for Rome as a city dominated by ‘a stench that we moderns can scarcely imagine’ (to use Patrick Süskind’s famous description of eighteenth-century Paris); Neville Morley presents an alternative account in which Roman noses were so habituated to these smells that they were barely noticeable. David Potter examines the complex scents of cooking and food presentation in the rich banquets of the wealthy elite as part of a political dialogue; Shane Butler explores the perfumes of Latin poetry and their allusion to the erotic vapour of the irresistible female body; Mark Bradley probes the use of body odour to differentiate social status, where the aristocratic nose was trained to sniff out the base bodies of those at the margins of civilisation; and Jerry Toner demonstrates that Christianity introduced innovative ways of representing smell that lay at the heart of how early Christians defined themselves.

The ancient senses represent a burgeoning field of study: the last decade has seen a flurry of workshops, conferences and publications. Why do sensory studies justify so much space? One answer is that this line of enquiry is dedicated to breaking down the ancient world into the most basic units of the human environment: it scrutinizes the role played by sights, sounds, odours, tastes and touch in the realm of information and communication, and in negotiating the relationship between ancient perceivers and the world around them. A fragment of one of Varro’s Menippean Satires, comparing the city of Rome to the human body, describes the senses as the city gates, portals that monitored the relationship between the inside and the outside, that kept an eye, ear and nose on the outside world.

Mark Bradley, University of Nottingham
mark.bradley@nottingham.ac.uk

Reconsidering the impact and importance of the Antonine plague

In recent years, scholars have identified the so-called ‘Antonine Plague’ of the second century AD as a significant event in the history of the Roman Empire, if not the major cause of the crisis of the following century and the empire’s subsequent decline. Christer Bruun (University of Toronto), Myles Lavan (University of St Andrews) and Colin Elliott (Indiana University) came together at the 2015 Classical Association Annual Meeting in Bristol to discuss new approaches to qualifying and quantifying the plague’s impact and importance.

Bruun asked us to consider the literary, epigraphic and archaeological evidence – including silences in the historical record – of disease outbreaks during the Roman Principate. In light of this evidence, he urged caution about making the plague into something more impactful than it may have been. While the Antonine plague was surely a calamitous event, Bruun suggested that historians should be wary of giving it a ‘special’ status as a watershed moment within the larger historiography of the Roman Empire, let alone the origin of ‘decline and fall’.

Lavan has been working on a Leverhulme-funded project on the spread of Roman citizenship, a project which has required him to find innovative ways to account for the quantitative uncertain of the Antonine plague’s impact upon the population. By using the power of computers to run tens of thousands of simulations based upon different estimates for key variables – total population before the plague, total mortality, the duration of the plague and any post-plague population boom – he was able to produce a narrowed range of possible demographic outcomes. Most importantly, his approach challenges the notion that demographic scholars should attempt to produce an estimate, while simultaneously offering a means by which complex and highly uncertainty demographic problems can be analysed.
Elliott also encountered the Antonine plague in the context of a larger project on the ecological and epidemiological boundaries of the Roman economy, which led him to suspect that the demographic and economic changes in the mid to late second-century AD may have been the result of resource dislocation caused by inherent structural weaknesses in the Roman Empire’s tributary economy. He explored whether this embedded fragility caused the Roman economy to buckle in the face of the ecological changes which appear to have created problems in the grain-producing areas in the Mediterranean basin, particularly the agrarian regions of Egypt.

The panel addressed a number of controversial themes: revisionist history, the use of social scientific methodology, and primitivist versus modernist perspectives on the Roman economy – topics which naturally generated a robust conversation among attendees as well as a thoughtful response from Neville Morley (University of Bristol). The Antonine Plague may not be the answer to all the debates about the development of the Roman Empire – but it clearly remains an important starting point for debate.

Colin Elliott, Indiana University

From the field

Marble portrait of Geta from the River Thames

One of the most remarkable objects to pass through the London sale rooms in recent times is not widely known, but is described in the new catalogue of Roman sculpture from London and the South East, GB fascicule 10 of the Corpus Signorum Imperii Romani series, published in April 2015.

A superb marble head of Geta from the river Thames was sold at Christies St James’s in 1977 and is currently in the John Paul Getty Museum in Malibu. Shoulders amputated with a chisel, ears cut off in antiquity and nose lost, perhaps when it was knocked from a pedestal, the bust bears witness to extensive mutilation. A bust from the cellar at Lullingstone, maybe that of Pertinax when he was Governor of Britain, was similarly mutilated, perhaps consequent to the military revolt which led to his flight from the province.

That this represents Geta is fairly certain: the high forehead and wavy hair are mirrored in coin portraits of the emperor-to-be in his late teens. Whether the drapery hints at military dress, and so a date close to that of his first election as consul in AD 205, or whether the bust instead commemorates his proclamation as Augustus in London in AD 210, is debatable.

Less well established is the exact provenance. It might be a Grand Tour souvenir and not a real Londinium find, but it is said to have been recovered from the River Thames, and symbolic dumping in the river would be an appropriate enactment of damnatio memoriae. The features indeed appear smoothed, consistent with a long sojourn in water. Moreover, a pattern emerges of statue portraits from London and the South East of emperors who had much to do with Britain: Hadrian visited in AD 122; Pertinax, later Emperor, governed in AD 185; while the Severan family stayed here AD 208-211. Could Geta add another, genuine Roman find, to this sequence?

P. Coombe, F. Grew, K. Hayward, and M. Henig, Roman Sculpture from London and the South-East, Corpus Signorum Imperii Romani, GB vol.I, fascicule 10, was published on 16 April 2015. With thanks to Francis Grew and Martin Henig, who conducted the original research on this object for the volume and provided comments.

Penny Coombe
pcoombe@museumoflondon.org.uk
From the field

The Roman fort at Pentrehyling, Shropshire

A report has been published on the Roman fort at Pentrehyling, Shropshire covering work carried out between 1977 and 1991. Excavations were conducted at Pentrehyling Fort on the Shropshire/Montgomeryshire border between 1977 and 1998 by John Allen and the Central Marches Archaeological Research Group (CMARG) based at University of Manchester. During these excavations, a road-widening scheme for the A489 was carried through by Shropshire County Council in 1989-91, who commissioned Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (BUFAU) to carry out the work. At the same time, BUFAU investigated the nearby marching camp and section of Offa’s Dyke at the adjacent Brompton Farm.

Evaluation of the cropmarks of the Brompton Camps successfully demonstrated the existence of at least two camps, although a third could not be confirmed. Evidence for Offa’s Dyke was also observed. No date was obtained for the camps but they are surmised to be dated to the Flavian period in parallel with examples elsewhere in the region. Excavations in Pentrehyling Fort, to the west of Brompton, revealed combined barracks and stables for a mounted or part-mounted unit. Other buildings were less readily identifiable. The fort was of conventional type with a turf and timber rampart, corner towers and double ditches on all but the south side. There was an annexe attached to the south side perhaps extending to the River Caebitra.

Between Brompton Camp and Pentrehyling Fort was a vicus that was contemporary with the latter. Here evidence was found for lead smelting and iron working which extended into the fort when it had apparently ceased to be garrisoned. This included a rare discovery of litharge, a by-product of lead smelting. Dating evidence provided by a small number of coins and quantities of pottery and glass indicated that the fort was established in the Flavian period and may have been abandoned by the end of the 1st century. The vicus appeared to have remained in occupation into the 2nd century but was seemingly abandoned by the Hadrianic period. Re-occupation of the site in the mid 4th century was evidenced by pottery, a coin and a silver spoon found in the fort ditch. The nature of this occupation remained undefined.

This report will appear as Volume 88 of the Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Historical Society. Members can order a copy of the report via the address below for £15 + £2.90 p&p. Cheques should be made payable to the Shropshire Archaeological and Historical Society.

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Some notes on the Julio-Claudian statue group found in the Roman city of Los Bañales (Uncastillo, Saragossa).

Excavations in the Roman city of Los Bañales, in the Northern part of the conventus Caesaraugustanus in the Roman province of Hispania Citerior, have led to a major reinterpretation of the history of the town due to discoveries of statue fragments in the southern cryptoportico of the forum. This area has been interpreted as a dumping area for material from the forum, part of the sequences of changes experienced by the Roman city from the end of the 3rd century AD and attested, for instance, in the spolia used in the urban area near the balnea.

The ongoing excavations in this area have allowed the sculptural material from the 2013 campaign to be reconstructed as a programmatic group of Julio-Claudian statues, displayed in the forum until it went out of use. Although the level of preservation is variable, some have been identified – based on stylistic studies – as members of the imperial family. A richly decorated thoracatus, dated to the Flavian period has been identified as Domitian, and fragments of three heads seem to be of Julio-Claudian princes. The best preserved example has been identified as Germanicus; a second has been interpreted as a possible Drusus; and the third as an unidentifiable Julio-Claudian prince.

Though research into this statue group is still being carried out, these identifications so far have contributed to the study of the whole process of political propaganda and imperial cult in Hispania, related to that in other Western provinces of the Roman Empire. With regard to the Roman city of Los Bañales, the presence of such a statue group, only attested in Bilbilis and Caesaraugusta in the Ebro valley, points to the role played by this Roman city in the whole conventus, as well as its early integration in the imperial propaganda programs, unveiling new aspects of the Roman province of Hispania.

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Website: www.losbanales.es
Video Thoracatus: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8YESqq9DgrY

Bibliography:


Excavation of Earthworks at Homestall Wood, Canterbury, Kent

Initial excavations during early March 2015 on earthworks in Homestall Wood, Harbledown have clarified details of the earthwork enclosures overlooking Bigbury Camp and the line of Watling Street west of Canterbury. This site is part of an earthwork complex identified by field walking and LiDAR survey and extending over 10 sq km of the Blean woodland west and north of Bigbury.

An interim plan of the main Homestall earthwork and a summary of observations in 2013 appeared in Britannia (Booth 2014, 393-4). The main polygonal earthwork is approximately 840m E-W by 560m N-S overall, enclosing approximately 35 ha of a spur 60 - 80m above sea level. The single bank and external ditch is of regular profile and approximately 18m wide overall. Interruptions in the bank may indicate perhaps four or five entrances but the ditch appears continuous. On the south-east side a complex and substantial outer entrance and linear earthwork faces the Stour Valley. A separate dyke blocks access from the rising ground to the west. In the western central interior is a rectangular enclosure 170 x 140m, defined by a single ditch on three sides and part of the fourth, with an apparent east entrance.

Two areas were investigated: Site A on the north-west side of the main earthwork; and Site B, on the east side of the inner enclosure. At Site A, a section of the bank showed it to be 8m wide, surviving to 1m high and composed of layers of clay and gravel laid in conformity with the slope of the underlying grey clay subsoil. The high water table prevented investigation of the ditch or the rear of the bank. No dateable finds were recovered but dating from C14 samples may be possible.

On Site B, an area on either side of the ditch revealed adjoining structures, close to an apparent causewayed entrance. Post holes and a low bank were set back from the ditch edge, overlying a well-defined gravel surface. The bank produced native pottery and Gallic imports of the late first century BC or early first century AD. A simple leaf shaped iron arrow head, its socket pierced by a rivet-hole, was also recovered. On the exterior margins of the bank a series of narrow gullies appear to be wheel ruts and could result from traffic following the outer perimeter before approaching the postulated entrance.

Subsequently, amphora sherds recovered from a tree hole close to site A appeared to derive from an underlying feature, the fabric of Campanian black-sand type, the body form consistent with the Dressel 1 vessels of the first century BC.

The work was carried out with the kind permission and support of the woodland manager Rick Vallis of Silva Woodland Management and the landowner, John Wilson-Haffenden. The assistance of Canterbury Archaeological Trust staff, members of the Dover Archaeological Research Group, a research student from the University of Kent and volunteers both local and from afar is gratefully acknowledged. Financial backing was provided by Hugh Toller, Phillip Barker, Shaun Mitchem and an anonymous donor, to whom most grateful thanks are due.

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Conferences & Meetings

Tim Mitford: East of Asia Minor. Rome’s Hidden Frontier
Thursday 24 September, 6.30pm
Wolfson Auditorium, British Academy, 10 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1Y 5AH

Isolated by wars, instability, sensitivities about Armenians, Greeks and Kurds, language, and wild, remote mountains accessible only on horseback or on foot, Rome’s remotest frontier ran across eastern Turkey to the Black Sea. Fellow of British Institute at Ankara (BIAA) in the early 1960s, Tim Mitford embarked on 50 years of fieldwork, continued throughout and after a career in the Royal Navy. This illustrated lecture presents the monumental evidence: fortresses and forts linked by strategic roads, bridges, glimpses of watch and signalling systems, with inscriptions, sighted coins and navigation of the Euphrates itself.

This lecture is free to members of the Roman Society. Please register by emailing: Claire McCafferty (biaa@britac.ac.uk) [registration via the BIAA website will lead to a charge of £10].
RPC volume IX is online

Volume IX of Roman Provincial Coinage is now published online on the RPC website: \texttt{http://rpc.ashmus.ox.ac.uk}. This volume covers the reigns of Trajan Decius and his family, Trebonianus Gallus and Volusian, and of Aemilian and Uranius Antoninus, \textit{i.e.} from AD 249 to 254. The work was commenced by Eduardo Levante, but his death left an unfinished manuscript. The volume was eventually taken over and completed by Antony Hostein (Paris) & Jerome Mairat (Oxford). Your feedback and contributions will help to improve both the online version and the paper version, which should be published in about a year.

A few figures: 2,311 coin types, recording 12,331 coins, of which 7,447 have online images. From Viminacium in the West to Rhesaena in Mesopotamia in the East, provincial coinage in this period was issued by no fewer than 119 cities. Most issues are from Asia Minor, although the most productive mints of this volume were elsewhere: Viminacium, Antioch in Syria, Caesarea Maritima and Alexandria in Egypt. The coins produced by the client kingdom of Bosporus are covered for the years 249-254. The gold coinage of Uranius Antoninus, produced at Emesa with Latin inscriptions, is also included, alongside the silver tetradrachms and the bronze coins in his name.

The launch of the new online volume provided the opportunity to improve the existing project website. The underlying database and the core of the website have been entirely rewritten to make the website multi-volume – a difficult but necessary step for the future of the project. New images have been added to RPC volume IV (from Antoninus Pius to Commodus), making it easier to search and more complete.

An important new facility allows the mapping of research results. One example: where does Roma occur on provincial coinage? Search for ‘Roma’ then choose ‘Map view’ (see figure). The maps are zoomable and allow a better understanding of the geography and the patterns of the coinage. The potential of instant visualizations of search results for research and teaching is enormous.

Volume III (Nerva - Hadrian) by Michel Amandry and Andrew Burnett will be published later this year, both online and on paper. This long awaited volume will be monumental: a catalogue of 6,570 coin types, recording 41,646 coins. Pere Pau Ripollès is working on a consolidated version of the three RPC supplements, which should be ready for the international congress in September.

2015 promises to be an exciting year for the Roman Provincial Coinage project!

Jerome Mairat
Co-director of RPC online
\texttt{http://rpc.ashmus.ox.ac.uk}
Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford

New to Cambridge University Press in 2015

Now online only and open access, The Journal of Classics Teaching (JCT) is the leading journal for teachers of Latin, ancient Greek, Classical Civilisation and Ancient History in the UK. JCT welcomes articles, news and reports about Classics teaching in the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors, as well as items of interest to teachers of Classics from the UK and abroad.

See: \texttt{http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayJournal?jid=JCT}

Steven Hunt
stevenchunt2@aol.com

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2015 promises to be an exciting year for the Roman Provincial Coinage project!
Dr Ernest Schonfield (Lecturer in German, Glasgow), and Professor Gesine Manuwald (Professor of Latin, UCL).

The aim of the Network for Oratory and Politics is to facilitate research into and discussion of political oratory across historical periods and regions in order to broaden the study of political speech and reach out to non-academic communities.

Our recent workshop on ‘Speaking to the People from the ancient world to the modern day’ gathered an ancient historian, a political scientist working on contemporary British political speech, and a speech writer from the Scottish Parliament in a discussion of the parameters and possibilities when addressing a popular audience. Their papers sparked a lively debate with the audience. You can read our blog about the workshop and listen to the talk by ancient historian Amy Russell on: www.gla.ac.uk/networkfororatoryandpolitics. The website also has more information about our scope, the steering committee, members, and affiliated networks and societies on oratory and rhetoric.

Future events include a seminar series on political oratory in different historical periods (including ancient political oratory), and a postgraduate workshop which aims to analyse political speeches from ancient, pre-modern and modern periods.

Membership is free and members receive information about events and other activities; if you wish to become a member, please email us at networkfororatoryandpolitics@gmail.com.

Hugh Last Fellowship
Prof. Maureen Carroll has been awarded the Hugh Last Fellowship at the British School at Rome, to be taken up in spring 2016. Her research project ‘Mater Matuta and related goddesses: guaranteeing maternal fertility and infant survival in Italic and Roman Italy’ explores the literary, historical, epigraphic, and visual evidence for fertility goddesses and the association of the divine with pregnancy, childbirth, and nursing in late Iron Age and Roman Italy, primarily the 4th to 1st centuries B.C. It assesses the religious context of these deities and examines aspects of their worship and veneration, including especially votive dedications and images of fecundity in Rome, Capua, Satricum and many other central and southern Italian sites.

Network for Oratory and Politics
The Network for Oratory and Politics is an interdisciplinary research network on the relationship between oratory and politics and a multi-institutional collaboration funded by a Royal Society of Edinburgh Research Network grant. The network is led by Dr Henriette van der Blom (Lecturer in Classics, Glasgow),
street scenes featuring everyday Roman Londoners from soldiers to artists.

The Museum of London is giving Epistula readers the chance to win one of 5 pairs of tickets for your choice of show time at the Gladiator Games! To enter, visit www.museumoflondon.org.uk/epistula-competition and fill in your details before 31 July 2015.

**Show times**

Evenings: 10 & 14 Aug, 7-8pm
Weekends: 8, 9, 15 & 16 Aug, 12-1pm & 3-4pm.

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**Kent Archaeological Field School**

Kent Archaeological Field School are running a series of archaeological courses during 2015:

**July 25 – August 14**

Excavation of Roman bath-house at Abbey Barns, Faversham
Members £10 a day, non-members £25

**August 3 – 9**

Training week for students at the Roman villa, Faversham
£100 with free membership

**October 3 & 4**

Bones and burials
Members £50, non-members £65

**October 17 & 18**

Archaeological drawing
Members £50, non-members £65

For more details and to book see our website: www.kafs.co.uk

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**Gladiators in action**

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**Books**

**Building for Eternity: The History and Technology of Roman Concrete Engineering in the Sea**

C.J. Brandon; R.L. Hohlfelder; M.D. Jackson; J.P. Oleson

http://www.oxbowbooks.com/oxbow/building-for-eternity.html

One marker of the majesty of ancient Rome is its surviving architectural legacy scattered throughout the circum-Mediterranean landscape. Surprisingly, one aspect of this heritage remains relatively unknown: the physical remnants below the sea of a vast maritime infrastructure that sustained and connected the western world’s first global empire and economy. The key to this incredible accomplishment was maritime concrete, a building material invented and then employed by Roman builders on a grand scale to construct harbor installations anywhere they were needed, rather than only in locations with advantageous geography or topography.

This book explains how the Romans built so successfully in the sea with their new invention. The story is a stimulating mix of archaeological, geological, historical and chemical research. It also breaks new ground in bridging the gap between science and the humanities by integrating analytical materials science, history, and archaeology, along with underwater exploration. A pioneering methodology was used to bore into maritime structures both on land and in the sea to collect concrete cores for testing in the research laboratories of the CTG Italcementi Group, a leading cement producer in Italy, the University of Berkeley, and elsewhere. The resulting mechanical, chemical and physical analysis of 36 concrete samples taken from 11 sites in Italy and the eastern Mediterranean have helped fill many gaps in our knowledge of how the Romans built in the sea.

To gain even more knowledge of the ancient maritime technology, the directors of the Roman Maritime Concrete Study (ROMACONS) engaged in an ambitious and unique experimental archaeological project: the construction underwater of a reproduction of a Roman concrete pier or pila. The same raw materials and tools available to the ancient builders were employed to produce a reproduction concrete structure that appears to be remarkably similar to the ancient one studied during ROMACON’s fieldwork between 2002-2009.

This volume reveals a remarkable and unique archaeological project that highlights the synergy that now exists between the humanities and science in our continuing efforts to understand the past.
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